

despite the popularity of the legislation with the American people, my Republican colleagues are organizing to oppose the next round of COVID relief.

A report in CNN suggested that Republican leaders were “maneuvering” to keep every single Republican from supporting the American Rescue Plan, an exercise in pure partisanship. We have started to hear the same predictable objections in almost the same exact words that Republicans use in response to nearly every piece of Democratic legislation: “a liberal wish list”; “socialism.”

One Republican Member said that the American Rescue Plan was “to the left of Lenin.” Seriously, to the left of Lenin? Money for schools, vaccines, direct checks to struggling American families—checks that nearly every Member of the Senate supported just a few months ago—now it is to the left of Lenin?

This kind of reflexive partisan opposition is not going to wash with the American people. It wouldn’t wash at any time, but it especially doesn’t wash during this time of crisis. The American people have all heard it before, and they know the country needs help.

All week our Republican colleagues have been raising concerns about school closures. Well, I will tell you what, we all want to open schools. We all want them to reopen. We are all concerned, though, about the cost of remote learning on children and parents. So are the teachers. So are the children. So are the parents.

But how about we actually give schools the funding they need to reopen as quickly and safely as possible? That funding is in the American Rescue Plan. While our Republican colleagues are cynically attacking teachers—something they have done for decades—the school districts in their States are telling them they need more funding. Their school districts are telling them they need more funding to hire extra teachers and reduce class size, to change the infrastructure of their schools to increase social distancing, to hire tutors for summer school and the fall to help our children make up for lost time.

The education commissioner for the State of Nebraska, hardly a Democratic stronghold, put it simply: “There’s a lot of damage to repair.” Our Republican colleagues want schools to reopen. So do we. But what about actually doing something to make that happen as safely and as quickly as possible?

It seems my Republican colleagues have even taken issue with the tiny amount of funding in the bill that goes to a bridge in New York. They say: Look, a pork-barrel earmark from the Democratic leader, totally non-COVID-related. The truth is, this is one of the only bridges operated by the Federal Government. Its revenues for operating expenses have collapsed because of COVID. No one is using the bridge.

Ironically, the bridge is located in a district represented in the House by a Republican. And the request for this funding wasn’t made by me or any Democrat, for that matter. It came from the Trump administration 5 months ago. I learned about it being in the bill when I read about it in the newspaper.

That is how silly the talking points of the other side have gotten. Republicans are not happy about a small provision in the bill requested by the previous Republican administration, so they are going to oppose direct checks to struggling families, another round of assistance for small businesses, and money for schools and vaccinations. The argument is absurd and, we know, a total excuse.

Look, we Democrats would prefer to work with our colleagues on the other side of the aisle to pass this bill. We had an open, bipartisan amendment process on the budget resolution. We have already included many bipartisan amendments the Senate adopted into this new reconciliation bill. The first amendment we put on the floor for the restaurants was bipartisan, and that was the first amendment I put on the floor as majority leader, showing my intent to be bipartisan.

But, at the end of the day, we cannot let obstructionism stop us. At the end of the day, the American people sent us here with a job to do.

The bottom line is simple: We are still in a historic crisis of the health of the economy. The American people know we are in a historic crisis. And the Senate will soon take action on our plan to solve this crisis, a plan with overwhelming public support. Our Republican colleagues will have to decide whether they will work with us to approve the legislation or obstruct it to the bitter end.

I yield the floor.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOKER). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Vermont.

#### WELCOMING ANN BERRY

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I appreciate what the leader just said about COVID. It certainly reflects the feelings of people in my State that we have to get going.

But I am here on a different matter today. Since the 1780s, we have had an extraordinary list of Secretaries of the Senate. The outgoing Secretary Julie Adams is one of those extraordinary

people who have been here, and I have had the distinct pleasure and honor of serving with so many.

But let me be personal for a moment. On Monday, in my role as President pro tempore, I will administer the oath of office to an amazing person, Sonceria Ann Berry. She will become the Secretary of the Senate.

This is a woman who earned her bachelor’s degree in education from the University of North Alabama, and she has had so much experience in the Senate. She first worked for Senator Howell Heflin of Alabama.

I had the pleasure of serving with Senator Heflin—as I found when I would travel to Alabama with him, he usually would be greeted with “Hello, Judge.” He was a man who had an extraordinary sense of how the Senate worked but made very clear to me how much he relied on Ann Berry. She worked with other good friends of mine: Senator Pat Moynihan, whose office was right down the hall from mine, and Senator Edwards and Senator CARPER. She took time out from her duties in my office to help stand up Senator JONES’ office.

She came to the Leahy office in 2007, and she worked with my chief of staff, J.P. Dowd. They gave such leadership to my office, and I have found that almost daily, I would stick my head into Ann’s office and say: Here is the situation; what do you think we should do here or there? I knew what a go-to in the Senate she had been for generations of staffers, a mentor to dozens of young staffers and interns. I have also said over and over again that we Senators are merely a constitutional impediment to our staffs. Well, this impediment was delighted he could go to Ann Berry and seek help and advice.

I think of her and her family—Reginald, her wonderful husband, and her daughter, Elizabeth, whom I have had a chance to see grow up to become a young woman who is distinguishing herself working here in the Senate.

I also think of her sayings, like “This, too, shall pass” or “I may have been born at night, but I wasn’t born last night.” “There is more than one way to skin a cat,” or sometimes when we had been here late into the night, she says, “Nothing good happens after midnight.” But with her, everything good happened.

I think of the Senate and all of us in it, in a way, as a family. Over my years here, I have become more and more aware of that. But Ann Berry truly was. I don’t know how many times somebody working in my office would have an issue—not just the professional things; she was always there to answer those and give direction. They would go in and say, “You know, I have had this thing that has been troubling me” and know that they could get wonderful advice but also advice in confidence.

I will admit that my grandchildren, my wife and I think the world of her. We do have one grandchild, now 15, but

for the last few years, he would be in my office, and he would say, "I want to go leave a note for Miss Ann," and young Patrick would go and leave notes for her. It is a kind of family.

I think the world of our majority leader. When he told me that he wanted to appoint Ann Berry as Secretary of the Senate, I told him I will forgive him this once only because of her extraordinary capabilities.

I will speak more about her next week, but one thing that is going to give me pride because of who it involves is that on Monday, as President pro tempore, I will administer the oath of office to the extraordinary Ann Berry, and I will do it as one of the proudest moments since I have been here.

I yield the floor.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

#### ELECTIONS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, next week, House Democrats say they will try to recycle failed legislation that would have Washington Democrats grab unprecedented power over how America conducts its elections and how American citizens can engage in political speech.

For several years now, we have seen the political left grow less interested in having normal policy debates within our governing institutions and more interested in attacking the institutions themselves to tilt the playing field in their side's favor.

When their side loses a Presidential election, it is not their fault; it is the electoral college's. When they don't like a Supreme Court's decision, it is time to threaten the Justices or pack the Court. When longstanding Senate rules threaten to frustrate far-left proposals, it is the Senate rules they want to change. And now House Democrats want to try to use their slim majority to unilaterally rewrite and nationalize election law itself. They want to use the temporary power the voters have granted them to try to ensure they will never have to relinquish it.

This year's version of the House Democrats' legislation contains the same bad ideas as their efforts 2 years ago. For example, when the Federal Election Commission was created after Watergate with the sensitive job of regulating American politics, it was designed to require bipartisan consensus. House Democrats want to scrap those rules and turn the FEC from an even-numbered body, bipartisan body, to an odd-numbered partisan body so Democrats can dominate it. Then they want to hand the newly partisan FEC new authorities to scrutinize and regulate an even wider share of political speech and private citizens' activities. Or take election law itself—House Democrats

have looked at the division and the disunity of the last several months and decided that what American elections really need is a one-size-fits-all partisan rewrite by one side here in Washington.

In our country, States and localities run elections. Those of us in the Federal Government do not get a stranglehold over the ways in which voters decide our fates. But House Democrats want to change that. Their bill would take prudential questions about early voting, registration, and no-excuse absentee balloting and resolve them one way for the entire Nation. They want to force all 50 States to allow the absurd practice of ballot harvesting, where paid operatives can show up at polling places carrying a thick stack of filled-out ballots with other people's names on them. They want to forbid States from implementing voter ID or doing simple things like checking their voter rolls against change-of-address submissions. They want to mandate no-excuse mail-in balloting as a permanent norm, post-pandemic. And—I promise I am not making this up—their bill proposes to directly fund political campaigns with Federal tax dollars. They want to raise money through new financial penalties, which the government would then use to fund campaigns and consultants. It is a strange idea. It takes a minute to kind of wrap your head around it. They want the Federal Government itself to send money for things like political ads that half the country disagrees with. What a bizarre concept that nobody is asking for.

This sweeping Federal takeover would be exactly the wrong response to the distressing lack of faith in our elections that we have recently seen from both political sides.

After both 2016 and 2020, we saw significant numbers of Americans on the losing side express doubt in the validity of the result. As recently as late last September, fewer than half of Democrats said they were confident the 2020 election would be free and fair. Just weeks later, however, by mid-November, once things had gone the way they wanted, Democrats' confidence in the election magically skyrocketed up to 90 percent. We cannot keep trending toward a future where Americans' confidence in elections is purely a function of which side won.

A sweeping power grab by House Democrats, forcibly rewriting 50 States' election laws, would shove us further and faster down that path. In this country, if the people who win elections want to hold on to power, they need to perform well, pass sound policies, and earn the support of the voters again. House Democrats do not get to take their razor-thin majority, which voters just shrunk, and use it to steamroll States and localities to try to prevent themselves from losing even more seats the next time. Protecting democracy cannot be a partisan issue.

#### TRIBUTE TO JULIE ADAMS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on a completely different matter, this week, the institution of the Senate is losing a talented leader who has spent 6 years as one of our top officials.

The Secretary of the Senate is a truly unique position in American Government. She or he is essentially the chief administrative officer of the institution itself. Back in the 18th century, that meant keeping the minutes and records and making sure people had ink for their quills. Today, it means managing a sprawling array of offices packed with career professionals, everything from parliamentary procedure to payroll, to public records, to the Senate Library and the page school and much more. The Secretary also fulfills key institutional functions. She or he signs every act that we pass. They carry formal messages to other branches of our government.

It takes major smarts, guts, integrity, and people skills just to survive in this mammoth job, let alone to actually thrive in it, but for the last 6 years, Julie Adams hasn't just survived, she hasn't just personally thrived; she has strengthened the entire institution of the Senate.

I first met Julie back in 2003 when we hired her to help out our press team. I was just starting my time as Republican whip. Julie was new to Washington, but she wasn't new to policy or to politics, and she knocked everyone's socks off right from the start. She combined diligence and professionalism with a heart of gold. She mastered her day job, volunteered for tasks above and beyond, and became the whole office's favorite teammate.

Of course, nobody is perfect; for example, Julie is not a Kentuckian. She is a proud daughter of Iowa. But trust me, she has become an honorary citizen of the Commonwealth many times over.

A few years later, she was stolen away to do important work for First Lady Laura Bush, but in 2009, we brought her back to coordinate operations and administration across both my personal office and my leadership office. She brought great judgment, a quick mind, stellar instincts, and a meticulous eye to a big job and made us all a whole lot better. From short-term crises to long-term relationships, Julie can do it all.

While perpetually juggling 10 tasks for herself, she always found ways to look after everyone else. She made sure each of her colleagues, down to the most junior, got the attention and the resources they needed. Everyone was included. Everyone mattered. She made sure of it.

Her talent and skills made Julie an easy choice for Secretary of the Senate after we took the majority in 2014. Now, there is always the potential for sensitivity when a new leader, appointed by a Senate leader of one party, comes in to oversee huge numbers of dedicated, long-serving, non-partisan specialists. Not surprisingly,